

Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)

Steering Committee Meeting

November 30, 2007, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Resources Agency Bldg., Room 1131

Draft Meeting Notes

Associated documents/handouts:

- Agenda
- Proposed Formulation of BDCP HCP/NCCP Biological Goals and Objectives
- BDCP Next Steps (paper handout only)

Action Items and Key Decisions

- Goals and Objectives Workgroup will convene before next Steering Committee (SC) meeting and will produce a draft proposed set of biological goals and objectives for presentation at the January 11, 2008 SC meeting.
- Revised timeline for work products and Gantt chart will be completed for the next SC meeting.

Updates

- Delta Vision Task Force: policy report meetings were held yesterday and today. Several BDCP members are in attendance
- Pelagic Organism Decline: synthesis report will be released in January 2008 by the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis.
- Prospect Island fish kill: Reclamation has owned and managed the island since 1995, and has fixed multiple levee breaks in the past. Last weekend after the existing levee breach was closed and island drainage was initiated, large numbers of sport fish became stranded (60% striped bass, 20% carp, no listed species found) and media attention was focused there. USBR stabilized the situation by salvaging fish and installing aeration for the remaining fish. Reclamation plans to dispose of the island upon completion of current levee fix because costs and liabilities of management are high.
- SWRCB hearings will be held 12/4. They are discussing which proposed projects in the Delta will be further considered for implementation. SWRCB is engaging with other agencies and planning entities in the Delta.

Next Steps

Karen Scarborough provided a handout of the Next Steps section of the Points of Agreement document (paper copy only). The actions described in the document are the priority next steps for BDCP, not an exhaustive list of all actions and deliverables in the BDCP workplan. A revised Gantt chart will be produced by management team for the next SC meeting that will describe the relationships among workgroups, goals, and deliverables, and schedule.

BDCP organizational structure: SC will continue to meet every other week through 2008 and is the decision-making entity. Several working groups and technical groups will be convened in the near future, possibly including goals and objectives, habitat restoration, conveyance, and governance. The consultant will assist in preparing documents for the workgroups.

Biological Goals and Objectives

Paul Cylinder presenting. The USFWS 5-point policy for ESA defines biological goals as the operating principles for an HCP, and objectives as the components needed to achieve the goal. BDCP goals and objectives are a nested hierarchy, starting broadly and narrowing in specificity from planning goals to conservation goals, biological goals, biological objectives, and conservation measures. Biological goals will guide us in development of the habitat restoration program.

Proposed ecological hierarchy for BDCP biological goals and objectives is as follows: ecosystem level, natural community level, species-level goals and objectives.

Discussion

There was concurrence among members that a Biological Goals and Objectives (G+O) Workgroup should be formed and convene before the next SC meeting to draft a set of working biological goals and objectives. See also Action Items and Key Decisions. Jason Peltier will chair that workgroup. The biological goals and objectives will ultimately include measurable criteria. The goals will be designed for long-term flexibility and adaptability to new information, and are expected to evolve during the planning process. The science advisors' report will be considered in developing the objectives.

John Engbring (USFWS) noted that HCP goals and objectives can include population size or habitat (acreage) targets for covered species, but the latter only if there is a close correlation between the two. Most Delta species will likely require population targets, however, due to scientific uncertainties about habitat requirements.

ERP Conservation Strategy

Carl Wilcox presenting. NOAA Fisheries, DFG, and USFWS are the implementing entities for CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP), which is currently at the end of Stage 1 (Planning). Administrative draft of the End of Stage 1 Report is being released today, to be publicly available on 12/14. Stage 2 will cover implementation of the conservation plan, identify performance measures, governance structure, funding considerations, science standards (DRERIP), a monitoring program, and adaptive management; and will provide guidance on how to interact with other Delta planning processes, including BDCP.

ERP is the biological vision for the Delta and Suisun Marsh and Bay, and is recommending an ecosystem-based approach to species recovery. A key conclusion of the Stage 1 analysis is that the Delta water conveyance system is critical; the report suggests that shifting from reliance on through-Delta would allow greater opportunities for restoration. Critical processes in the Delta include hydrology, aquatic food web

dynamics, and floodplain-channel connectivity. The five major ERP land-cover categories are: inter-tidal, floodplain, upland (transition), grassland/vernal pool transition corridor, and subsided lands

Development of the ERP conservation strategy has focused on delineating restoration opportunities based solely on consideration for land surface elevations and which at this time does not consider other constraints (e.g., current land use, landownership).

Target species in the ERP include native aquatic and terrestrial species. All BDCP covered species are included, among others.

Discussion

A cautionary note was offered clarifying that ERP “performance criteria” should not result in specific dictates to the BDCP regarding BDCP outcomes or performance.

Public Comments

Justin Frederickson. CFBF. ERP conservation strategy, including biological goals and objectives, has taken years to develop and has been given much more consideration than the BDCP workgroups will be able to provide, so it would be beneficial for BDCP to build on that work. Constraints and filters will also be important, and include water quality, flood control, levees, and land use, among others. CFBF encourages BDCP to consider those issues now rather than having it come back later.

Next meeting

Friday, 12/14. Same time and location. 12/28 meeting canceled for the holidays.

Meeting attendees

Representatives

Karen Scarborough (Chair, The Resources Agency)
Will Stelle (The Resources Agency)
Cindy Darling (The Resources Agency)
Laura King Moon (State Water Contractors)
Marc Ebbin (The Resources Agency/DWR)
Paul Cylinder (SAIC)
Carl Wilcox (DFG)
John Engbring (USFWS)
Russ Strach (NOAA Fisheries)
Jerry Johns (DWR)
Greg Gartrell (CCWD)
Steve Rothert (American Rivers)
Tracy Ligon (Santa Clara Water District)
Anthony Saracino (The Nature Conservancy)

Greg Thomas (Natural Heritage Institute)
Ara Azhderian (SLDMWD)
Kim Delfino (Defenders of Wildlife)
Brent Walthall (KCWD)
Randall Neudeck (Metropolitan)
Dale Myers (Zone 7)
Kenny Watkins (CFBF)
Tom Howard (SWRCB)
Gary Bobker (The Bay Institute)
Jason Peltier (Westlands)

By phone

Frank Michny (USBR)
Karla Nemeth (Zone 7)
Laura Simonek (Metropolitan)
Doug Wallace (EBMUD)